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PERCEPTION TOWARDS SEXUAL ENGAGEMENT OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the perception of senior high school students towards sexual engagement. This study utilized descriptive – comparative research design. The *Youth Sexual Intention Questionnaire (YSI-Q* which composed of four constructs, namely (1) Sexual intention (2) Attitude towards premarital sex (3) Social norms and (4) Self-efficacy) was administered to 284 senior high school students in Sta. Cruz National High School. The result has an 83.45% response rate (*n*=237). Independent T-test was used to measure the difference between sex, track and students' perception towards sexual engagement. Senior high school students have predominantly low extent of perception towards sexual engagement. Independent T-test analysis revealed that there is a significant difference between the sex of the students and their perception towards sexual engagement with p-value of 0.00 at 0.05. In addition, students' track and their perception towards sexual engagement found out to have significant difference with p-value of 0.00 at 0.05. Findings can be utilized by school administrators, guidance facilitators and educators to come up with symposiums and intensive lectures to parents and students about topics like sex and its consequences. Likewise, further studies with inclusion of family status as variable in determining students' perception towards sexual engagement were recommended.

Keywords*:* Psychology. Perception. Sexual engagement. Descriptive-comparative study. Philippines.

1 INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the age when a person becomes integrated in the society of adults. In this stage, the child no longer feels that he/she is below the level of his/her elders, but they are equal in some rights. It is important to note that adolescents should master developmental tasks especially in forming new and more mature relationship with members of the opposite sex and acquire mature and complete concept of sex that they had as children. This motivation only comes partly from the social pressures but mainly from the adolescents' interest and curiosity about sex (Hurlock, 2016).

Students in the senior high school aged are 16 to 21 considered to be adolescents. These students are exposed to many factors of pornographic materials especially that information can be easily accessed in just one click on the web. In addition, students' perception of relationship and sexual practices are embedded in the sex education information they obtained from school and

community. In a study by De haas, Hutter and Timmerman (2017), they highlighted that students engage in sexual activity for curiosity, financial rewards and physical needs.

In addition, more people have become open-minded about couples cohabiting before marriage and this trend is evident in all age groups from students to adults (Ounjit, 2011). Nevertheless, most people consider sexual activity an essential part of their lives and critical for the preservation of human species. However, some people expressed fear that they might have an unwanted pregnancy or HIV if they had sexed too early (De haas et al., 2017).

On the other hand, based on the 2017 UNAIDS Global Report, the Philippines has the fastest-growing HIV epidemic in Asia and the Pacific region with the highest increase in new HIV infections between 2010 and 2016. It was estimated that in the end of 2019, 93,400 Filipinos will be infected with HIV (Department of Health, 2019). In Davao City, a total of 39 new cases of Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV-Aids) obtained through sexual intercourse as per record in Davao City Reproductive Health and Wellness Center (Revita, 2019).

Meanwhile, the growing problem of early pregnancy was linked to the sexual perception of the young people. Filipino families' interaction on sensitive issues like sex are limited at home (Cruz, Laguna, & Mejia-Raymundo, 2001) which has an adverse effect in the mindset of the children. Consequently, the increasing number of senior high school students who engaged in early pregnancy particularly in Davao del Sur has been one of the major concerns that was discussed during the conference meeting of all senior high school coordinators of DepEd Davao del Sur. Moreover, Sta. Cruz National High School is not exempted from this problem. As per record from school year 2015 to 2019, it was found that there is an increased number of pregnant senior high school students. Some of the reasons of students who were dropped out in school were linked to teenage pregnancy.

With all these existing problems such as HIV cases and teenage pregnancy were just some of the results of students engaging in sexual activity. Because of that, the researchers would like to find out the senior high school students' perception towards sexual engagement.

Statement of the Problem

This study determined the perception of selected senior high school students towards sexual engagement.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the students in terms of:
    1.1 grade level and track;
    1.2 age;
    1.3 sex;
    1.4 family status?
2. What is level of the student's perception towards sexual engagements in terms of:
    2.1 intention to have sex;
    2.2 permissive attitudes toward premarital sex;
    2.3 social norms on premarital sex;
    2.4 self-efficacy on performing sexual activity?
3. Is there a significant difference between the sex in the student's perception towards sexual engagement?
4. Is there a significant difference between the tracks in the student's perception towards sexual engagement?

2 THEORITICAL FOUNDATION

This study was anchored on Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality that the pleasure principle is the driving force of the Id that seeks immediate gratification of all needs, wants, and urges. In other words, the pleasure principle strives to fulfill the most basic and primitive urges, including hunger, thirst, anger, and sex. When these needs are not met, the result is a state of anxiety or tension (Freud, 1991 cited by Cherry, 2020).

Abraham Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation, analogous to Sigmund Freud's Theory, pointed out that human beings have a certain number of needs and that these needs are organized in a hierarchy, with some requirements (such as physiological and safety needs) being more primitive or fundamental than others (such as social and ego needs). Maslow called the "deficiency needs" of the bottom four levels of the pyramid because a person does not feel anything if they are met, but if they are not, he becomes anxious.Thus, deficiency criteria are physiological needs such as feeding, drinking, and sleeping, as are protection needs, social needs such as friendship and sexual intimacy, and ego needs such as self-esteem and appreciation (Burton, 2019).

3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This chapter presents the design, sampling, instrument, procedures, and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This research study used quantitative research design that utilizes research techniques such as survey and tool-based data collection. The researchers have used descriptive-comparative design in which two variables are not manipulated and a systematic framework is developed to compare and conclude that if major differences exist, one is better than the other. (Villanueva, 2013). In this study, the sex and the track were identified as independent variable, while the student's perception towards sexual engagement was the dependent variable.

3.2 Respondents and Sampling

The study was conducted during SY 2019 - 2020 at Sta. Cruz National High School – Senior High School Program, a government high school located at Poblacion Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur, Philippines. The school has a total of 1,082 senior high students currently enrolled in different tracks namely; Academic track and Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) track.

The research respondents were selected Grade 11 and 12 senior high school students. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents. A total of 284 students were randomly-chosen to participate in the said study using simple random sampling. However, only 237 had returned and were considered for the data analysis because some respondents were not permitted by their parents to answer the questionnaire. Thus, it has an 83.45 percent response rate.

3.3 Research Instrument

In this study, the research instrument was composed of two parts. Part I was the demographic survey in which the respondents were asked to answer the following: sex, age, track, family status. Part II of the questionnaire was adopted questionnaire named *Youth Sexual Intention*

Questionnaire (YSI-Q). An email was sent requesting the authors for permission and approval to use the said questionnaire intended for this study. This self-administered questionnaire is composed of 20 items that is designed to measure current sexual intention of both male and female unmarried youths with four constructs, namely (1) Sexual intention, (2) Attitude towards premarital sex (3) Social norms and (4) Self-efficacy. The sexual intention construct consists of five items that reflects current youth intention to perform sexual activity.

The attitude towards premarital sex construct refers to having a permissive attitude towards premarital sex and composed of five items. The social norms construct comprised of six items that focuses on youth perception of what is being practiced or perceived by their peers. The self-efficacy construct refers to youth perception of their ability to perform sexual activity. YSI-Q is scored based on the responses on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). A higher total score of item 1 to 5 indicates a higher intention to have sex, a higher total score of item 6 to 10 indicates a higher permissive attitude towards premarital sex, a higher total score of item 11 to 16 indicates a higher perception of social norms on premarital sex and a higher total score of item 17 to 20 indicates a higher perception of self-efficacy on performing sexual activity. In this sample, Cronbach alpha values were $\alpha = 0.93$ for sexual intention, $\alpha = 0.89$ for attitude towards premarital sex, $\alpha = 0.94$ for social norms, and $\alpha = 0.90$ for self-efficacy.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedures

The researchers wrote a permission letter to the principal asking for the consent to conduct the study. A letter was also sent to the office of the registrar requesting for the class list of Grade 11 and Grade 12 classes.

For the gathering of data, a letter of parental consent was sent to selected respondents requesting them to allow their son/daughter to be the respondents of this study. Parental consent was very important before giving the questionnaire since some of the respondents were below 18 years old. After the parent consent were gathered and collected to the selected respondents, only 237 respondents returned and were able to answer the questionnaire-checklist since not all selected respondents were permitted to answer the said questionnaire.

The questionnaires were distributed to the participants personally inside their classroom. The respondents were given an ample time to answer the said questionnaire. After that, all the questionnaires were collected and were subjected to statistical treatment.

3.5 Data Analysis

For analysis and interpretation of the data, the following statistical tools were used.

Descriptive statistics were used in computing percentage of demographic profile of the respondents. While weighted mean and standard deviation were employed to compare the indicators of students' perception towards sexual engagement.

On the other hand, Independent t-test was used to measure the hypotheses for the difference of mean scores of gender, track, and students' perception towards sexual engagement at the 0.05 p-value.

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4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of data based on the Senior High School Students' perception towards sexual engagement from randomly selected students of Sta. Cruz National High School, Senior High School. The presentation of data is done in a tabular paradigm with numerical and qualitative description, which addressed the problems being asked in Chapter 1. The data are presented in such a way that it gives clear and accurate information to the readers of the study.

The following tables, figures, and interpretations show the data regarding the demographic profile of the participants in terms of gender, age, track taken in senior high school and family status.

In addition, the following data attempted to present whether there was a significant difference of the mean scores between gender, track and senior high school students' perception towards sexual engagement using T-test.

4.1 Demographic Profile

Data on the socio-demographic profile of the randomly selected senior high school students reveal the frequency and percentage distribution according to sex, age, senior high school track and family status as shown in Table 1A to Table 1D.

Table 1A shows the data of student's profile according to grade level and track. There are 20% or 47 Grade 11 Academic track students and 24% or 56 Grade 11 Technical Vocational Livelihood (TVL) students while there are 21% or 50 Grade 12 Academic track and 35% or 84 Grade 12 TVL students as participants of the study.

Table 1A. Students' Profile according to Grade Level & Track

Grade Level & Track	*N*	*%*
Grade 11 Academic	47	20
Grade 11 TVL	56	24
Grade 12 Academic	50	21
Grade 12 TVL	84	35
Total	**237**	**100**

On the other hand, Table 1B shows the demographic profile of the randomly selected senior high school students according to age. Majority of the respondents age 18 with 44% or 104 students followed by respondents aging 17 with 28% or 67 students. Age bracket 16 and 19 has the same percentage or number of students (11% or 27 respondents). According to Wellings et al. (2006) establish that men and women in most nations begin sexual activity at ages 15 to 19. This implies that the respondents were considered to be Late Adolescence/Young Adulthood wherein adolescence have frequent change and exploration in many aspects of their lives: home, family, school, and role. With the significant changes they encounter in this stage, youth must adapt sexually and establish a sense of sexual identity. This includes establishing values about sexual behavior and developing skills for romantic relationships (State Adolescent Health Resource Center, 2019).

Table 1B. Student's Profile according to Age

Age	*N*	*%*
16	27	11
17	67	28
18	104	44

19	25	11
20	5	2
21	5	2
22	2	1
23	1	0.5
24	1	0.5
Total	**237**	**100**

Table 1C presents the data on sex. From a total of 237 students, 62% or 147 were male and 38% or 90 were female. It further shows that there is no proportionate representation of participants by sex since the senior high school students are predominantly male.

Table 1C. Student's Profile according to Sex

Gender	*N*	*%*
Male	147	62
Female	90	38
Total	**237**	**100**

Table 1D indicates the student's profile according to family status. Out of 237 participants, there are 79.3% or 188 students were living together with their family, 6.3% or 15 students wherein their parents are legally separated and 14.4% or 34 are not legally separated. According to Tarroja (2010) Filipinos are family-centered, and their families have been observed to be closely-knit. Thus, it implies that most of the respondents were living together with their family.

Table 1D. Student's Profile according to Family Status

Family Status	*N*	*%*
Living Together	188	79.3
Legally Separated	15	6.3
Not Legally Separated	34	14.4
Total	**237**	**100**

Table 2 presents the mean comparison of student's perception towards sexual engagement. Based from the four indicators, it revealed that the respondents' perception in terms of intention to have sex (M=2.0565), permissive attitude towards premarital sex (M=2.2819), and social norms on premarital sex (M=2.2253) were interpreted as low. While self-efficacy on performing sexual activity (M= 2.8966) were interpreted as high. Thus, the overall respondents' perception towards sexual engagement were interpreted as low. It implies that students were not having primarily attention on sexual engagement.

Table 2. Mean Comparison of Student's Perception towards Sexual Engagement

Perception towards Sexual Engagement	*M*	*SD*	*Interpretation*
Intention to have Sex	2.0565	.76292	Low
Permissive Attitude towards Premarital Sex	2.2819	.67464	Low
Social Norms on Premarital Sex	2.2253	.72762	Low
Self-Efficacy on Performing Sexual Activity	2.8966	.71112	High

Overall Perception towards Sexual Engagement	**2.3654**	**.53438**	**Low**

4.2 Analysis of Difference in Mean Scores between Sex and Students' Perception toward Sexual Engagement

To examine the difference between sex, track and students' perception towards sexual engagement, t-test was used. This is presented in Table 3 is the T-test table for comparing the mean score of gender (male and female) and students' perception toward sexual engagement.

Table 3. Test of Significant difference between S and Students' Perception towards Sexual Engagement

Groups	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*T-value*	*P-value*
Male	149	2.52	.49	6.38	0.00
Female	88	2.09	.49		

**at 0.05 level of significant difference*

From the preceding table, it shows that the first null hypothesis has a p-value of 0.00 at 0.05 level of significant difference. Thus, it is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the perception of male and female toward sexual engagement.

With regard to adolescents' interest in knowing about sex, it was revealed those girls are more curious about birth control, abortion, and pregnancy while boys want to know about enjoyment of sex, sexual intercourse, and birth control. Both sexes' major interest is in sexual intercourse, its context and its consequences (Snyder, 1970 cited by Hurlock, 2016). Consequently, sexual risk taking behaviors have found out to be higher for men than for women (e.g. laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; Poppen, 1995; Seal & Agostinelli, 1996; Vollrath, Knoch, & Cassano, 1999 as cited by Wanjohi, 2014). In addition, men were more likely than women to engage in casual sex, have sex at a younger age, and have more sexual partners (Oliver & Hyde, 1993 as cited Wanjohi, 2014).

4.3 Analysis of Difference in Mean Scores between Sex, Track and Students' Perception toward Sexual Engagement

To examine the difference between the track and students' perceptions towards sexual engagement, Independent T-test was used.

Presented in the Table 4 is the Independent T-test table for comparing the mean of different tracks (Academic and TVL track) towards perceptions in sexual engagement.

Table 4. Test of Significant difference between Track and Students' Perception towards Sexual Engagement

Groups	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*T-value*	*P-value*
Academic Track	97	2.19	.47	-4.35	0.00
TVL Track	140	2.48	.54		

**at 0.05 level of significant difference*

Table 4 shows that the null hypothesis that states there is no significant difference between track and students' perceptions towards sexual engagement is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted which is less than 0.05 level of significant difference. Thus, this implies that

whether Academic and TVL track have different perceptions towards sexual engagement. It also implies that TVL track respondents are more likely to engage to sexual activity that Academic Track.

TVL track students were trained towards occupations related to skilled works while Academic track students were geared towards professional occupations. Based on George Chauncey's (2008) book, it was found that common day workers engaged in homosexual activity were less likely to participate in homosexual activity than any other group of men, followed by semi-skilled workers and low-status men, while men with higher-status white and collar jobs ranging from clergymen, actors, singers, bank officials and large store owners. The least of all men to do so were practitioners such as college teachers, doctors, and lawyers. In addition, typical laborers and semi-skilled workers engaged in heterosexual intercourse in the most non-marital as well as in the most homosexual while educated ones in the least.

Consequently, Greenspan (1992) mentioned in his study that the goal to fight poverty in the Philippines is to lower fertility through a strategy with the assumption to increase capacity of the economy that will support a growing population at a higher standard of living. He also added that over 33% of the households have 7 or more family members, while 20% of urban and 27% of rural households have 4 or more while the risk of poverty was associated with increased number of children are 44-50% for 1 child and 60-78% for those with 5. Because many families lack the resources to raise children the per child share drops dramatically with each child, a household with 4 children spends 25% less per child than does 1 with 2 children. Thus, occupation also affects income as the highest poverty rates are among heads of household who are laborers (60%) and agricultural workers (73%).

5 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Since the mean scores of students' perception towards sexual engagement were described as low, the students were not having primarily attention on sexual engagement.

In view of the fact that there is a significant difference in sex and students' perception towards sexual engagement on the mean score, therefore, males were more aware of themselves in terms of sex intention, attitude towards premarital sex, social norms on premarital sex, and self-efficacy on performing sexual activity rather than females. More so, there is a significant difference in the students' track (Academic and TVL) and perception towards sexual engagement. Therefore, TVL track showed high level of understanding towards sex intention, attitude towards premarital sex, social norms on premarital sex, and self-efficacy on performing sexual activity rather than Academic track.

Thus, the result suggests that gender and track maybe determining factors in the students' perception towards sexual engagement.

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